

## WIPP Quick Facts (As of 7-18-07)

**5,970**

Shipments received since opening

**49,806**

Cubic meters of waste disposed

**92,301**

Containers disposed in the underground

## Overview now available on the WIPP Home Page



A new overview video has been added to the WIPP Home Page. This mini-documentary lasts about two and a half minutes and covers much of the basic project information.

The overview can be accessed from a link on the main page or by going directly to the News & Information page.

[Overview](#)

*The following is from a news release issued by Bechtel BWXT Idaho earlier today.*

## BBWI sends non-certified drum to WIPP

the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) that they shipped a non-certified drum containing transuranic waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), the Department's nuclear waste repository near Carlsbad, N.M. BBWI operates DOE's Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Facility, located at the DOE's Idaho site, and certifies transuranic waste shipments from that facility to WIPP.

Before drums can be shipped to WIPP they have to be certified according to waste analysis procedures approved by the Environmental Protection Agency and the New Mexico Environment Department. Based on historical records, the drum contained transuranic waste and did not pose any danger to human health or the environment during shipping.

The non-certified drum was mistakenly sent in June and identified this week when BBWI workers discovered that a drum with the identification number of a drum that should have been sent to WIPP earlier was still in storage in Idaho. After cross checking shipping records against a waste tracking database, workers confirmed that the non-certified drum had inadvertently been shipped to WIPP on June 23, 2007.

All shipments to WIPP from the Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Facility have been temporarily suspended pending corrective actions by BBWI to ensure appropriate certification before all future shipments to WIPP.

"BBWI takes its compliance responsibility very seriously," said Paul Divjak, BBWI president and general manager. "Following a complete review of the causes of this incident, we will institute appropriate corrective actions to prevent future occurrences."

## EXO modules arrive at WIPP



Two trucks arrived at WIPP July 9 with clean room modules and containers filled with equipment that will be used for the Enriched Xenon Observatory (EXO) research project.

EXO's goal is to detect and study neutrinoless double beta decay, an extraordinarily rare nuclear process that occurs when disintegration of a nucleus is accompanied by emission of two electrons without any associated anti-neutrinos.

Normal beta decay involves a nucleus that emits an electron and antineutrino simultaneously. If detected, the rate of double beta decay can be used to measure the mass of the electron antineutrino. The finding could revolutionize current concepts about physics and cosmology.

EXO researchers hope to yield answers to secrets about the origins of mass and how mass is produced in the universe. Scientists want to be able to prove that neutrinos are their own anti-particle and be able to tell more about the mass of these nearly massless particles.

Once in the mine 2,150 feet below the surface, a 41-ton forklift will transport the modules to the North Experimental Area. The modules will have to be moved with caution and precision because of their size and weight of about 13,000 lbs and 15,500 lbs.

There will be two to three more shipments in the upcoming months with additional modules and containers. Eventually six modules will be assembled underground. The final module shipment will contain the detector, which is a special pressurized chamber of the rare gas Xenon that will be used to measure and observe this nuclear process.

The EXO first phase is planned to last several years and there is potential for a future second phase.

The equipment was shipped from Stanford University. It will be staged on the surface at WIPP and not be put underground until a window of opportunity arises that will not interfere with the TRU waste disposal at WIPP.

DOE made WIPP's unique underground repository available to the scientific community for research. EXO will be located far from the disposal area of the mine. The project will have a minimal impact on normal operations.

### **WIPP employees continue supporting Operation Comfort**

Lois George (WTS) and Steve Sauer (NCI) continue to work with Operation Comfort, a local organization that provides a support system for Eddy County soldiers deployed to the Middle East and their families.

With local veterans service organizations paying the postage and often providing items to pack, Operation Comfort has been able to send packages monthly, giving our troops a little taste of home.

"Local students have made cards, volunteers from churches have written letters, and our friends and neighbors have come through with supplies," says George.

"Operation Comfort intends to continue sending packages as long as there is one soldier serving whose family is from Eddy County."

The organization's families and community members meet regularly to pack care packages and share pictures, letters and stories. Anyone interested in additional information can contact George at Ext. 7615.

## **WIPP takes to the Windy City in support of LULAC**

Muy interesante! With mariachi music echoing throughout the exhibit hall, WIPP joined other exhibitors at the 78th Annual Convention of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) in Chicago, Ill. that attracted about 14,000 people.



Cuca Castillo and Jackie Hadzic (second and third from left), members of the Carlsbad chapter of LULAC, were among the many visitors to the WIPP booth at the organization's national conference in Chicago, Ill. Also pictured are Mike Antiporda and Rose Scott from WTS Communications.

While many of the conference attendees had not heard of WIPP before, once they visited the exhibit, there was a lot of interest in WIPP's unique mission. In fact, the reaction to WIPP upon hearing about the work being done was very positive.

Among the hundreds of information products offered by government agencies, corporations, non-profit organizations and political candidates in the hall, WIPP's 250-million-year-old salt samples proved to be one of the most unique collectables. Representatives from WTS Communication used the salt to explain what WIPP does and how deep geologic disposal in salt protects people and the environment.

Conference participants included WIPP stakeholders from New Mexico, corridor states and states with generator sites. Visitors from the Chicago area were interested to learn that shipments to WIPP have included some from nearby Argonne National Laboratory. The conference also included a youth conference that brought in more than 500 students from the surrounding area.

WIPP's exhibit was one of two at the LULAC convention that represented DOE. The other was staffed by DOE personnel from headquarters and the local DOE office.

On the last day of the conference, delegates voted to hold the 2010 convention in Albuquerque, N.M. The cities of Grand Rapids, Mich. and Ft. Worth, Texas also vied for the hosting privilege, with active campaigns during the convention to sway participating delegates.

LULAC's mission is to advance the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, health and civil rights of the Hispanic population of the United States.

## WIPP information system receives approval to operate

After a rigorous audit process by Mission Information Protection Program personnel from DOE headquarters, WIPP's information system was issued its most recent Authority to Operate (ATO) certification. The ATO is a requirement of the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA) of 2002. Recertification means that CBFO has adequately demonstrated its ability to minimize and mitigate risks to WIPP information systems from malicious sources.



Information Technology staff at WIPP celebrate renewed Authority to Operate certification.

CBFO Information Systems Security Manager Meg Milligan was notified of the ATO on June 27. The document had been issued the previous day by Jeanne Beard, DOE's designating approving authority.



"I want to extend my personal thanks and deep gratitude for all the hard work that made this happen," says Milligan. "As we enter the continuous monitoring phase, we will work to promote the best practices already in place."

Although information technology (IT) personnel from across the site contributed to this achievement, the technical staff for the General Support System, which includes the WIPPnet and the major mission support systems, was primarily responsible for the success. The rigorous standards required a great deal of overtime on weekends and during off-normal hours so regular work would be minimally impacted.

Although the certification is good for three years, if specific criteria are not met, the certification can be pulled. This will require constant vigilance and professional dedication from the IT staff, as well as all network users. Security status reports for the system must be submitted annually. In addition, vulnerabilities reported during the continuous monitoring process must not result in additional agency-level risk that is deemed unacceptable.



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### Interested in WIPP?

If you would like to be notified when TRU TeamWorks is updated with the latest information about WIPP, send an e-mail message to [TRUTeamWorks@wipp.ws](mailto:TRUTeamWorks@wipp.ws).

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## How to stay safe from lightning

Afternoon and evening thunderstorms around WIPP and southeast New Mexico are common this time of the year. Do you know how to keep yourself safe in a storm?

A single stroke of lightning has 125 million volts of electricity. That's enough power to light a 100-watt light bulb for more than three months, or enough to seriously hurt or kill someone. Lightning kills nearly a hundred people every year in the United States.

When you hear thunder or see lightning, keep yourself safe by following the safety rules below.

**Stay or go indoors!** If you hear thunder, don't go outside unless absolutely necessary.

**Stay away from anything that could conduct electricity.** This includes fireplaces, radiators, stoves, metal pipes, sinks, and phones.

**Don't use any plug-in electrical appliances.** If lightning strikes your house, hair dryers, electric toothbrushes, electric razors or other appliances can conduct the charge to you. When inside a building, avoid use of the land-line-based telephones (lightning may strike telephone lines outside), taking a shower, washing your hands, doing dishes, or any contact with conductive surfaces with outside exposure such as metal door or window frames, electrical wiring, telephone wiring, cable TV wiring, plumbing, etc.

**Stay in your automobile if you are traveling.** Automobiles (excluding convertibles) provide excellent lightning protection.

**Don't use metal objects outdoors.** Fishing rods and golf clubs can be dangerous during a storm. Golfers wearing cleated shoes are at risk. Avoid riding in golf carts during a lightning storm.

**Get out of the water.** This includes getting off of small boats.

**If you're outdoors, seek shelter from lightning!** Buildings are best for shelter, but if no buildings are available, you can find protection in a cave, ditch, or a canyon. Tall or isolated trees attract lightning and are not good cover. Avoid being in or near high places and open fields, gazebos, rain or picnic shelters, baseball dugouts, communication towers, flagpoles, light poles, bleachers (metal or wood), metal fences and water (ocean, lakes, swimming pools, rivers, etc). Lightning tends to travel the path of least resistance and often seeks out tall or metal objects. A tall object could be an office building, a home or a child standing on a ball field.

**If you can't find shelter, avoid the tallest object in the area.** If only isolated trees are nearby, your best protection is to crouch in the open, keeping twice as far away from isolated trees as the trees are high.

**Drop to the ground!** If you feel the electrical charge, if your hair stands on end or your skin tingles, lightning may be about to strike you. Drop to the ground immediately.

**No place is absolutely safe from the lightning threat.** Some places, however, are safer than others. Large enclosed structures (substantially constructed buildings) tend to be much safer than small or open structures. In general, fully enclosed metal vehicles such as cars, trucks, buses, vans, fully enclosed farm vehicles, etc. with the windows rolled up provide good shelter from lightning. Avoid contact with metal or conducting surfaces outside or inside the vehicle.

